

Address to the Carnegie Endowment Meeting
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Tape Transcript

Gene Bradley: Stan, to begin with let's address the point of national security challenges. As an opener, what are the strengths in the United States' strategic military position, what are the challenges--strategic and economic--facing the United States in the 1980's and how will the US respond to these challenges?

Admiral Turner: I've a big bite to start with, Gene. The real strategic strengths, not just military strengths of this country, are as well known, or better known, to all of you in the business world as we in the government, because surely the economic strength, the technological base, the education base of this country are some of the most important strengths. I don't think we should overlook our ideology while we're at it either. The fact that we do operate from a firm base of respect for the individual which the communist states do not. Militarily, the general perception is that we are falling behind the Soviet Union, but I would point out that we do have some very substantial military strengths. In the field of strategic nuclear warfare, both we and the Soviets, in my opinion, have adequate absolute strategic retaliatory capability to absorb a first blow from the other side and completely decimate the attacker. In relative strength in certain areas, the Soviets have moved ahead of us in recent years, and that causes us a particular concern because we, as a nation, are accustomed to the large margins of superiority that we had from the end of World War II until recently.

In a conventional sphere of the military world, what we have seen over the past several decades is just a steady determined, constant growth improvement of the Soviet conventional machine. It has always, of course, dominated in land warfare, but its ability and willingness to sacrifice eleven or twelve, thirteen percent of the gross national product in order to continue to grow and modernize in that conventional land forces sphere is very significant. In the air sphere, they have not, because of our technological advantage, had the quality we have had, but they have gone on with the numbers and tried to match us there, and their quality is constantly improving. And again, in the naval sphere, they are moving up to where they are a formidable challenge but not the match of the United States at this point.

So, Gene, I would say that we do have great strength to draw upon, but the challenges that face us in the decade ahead are to maintain both an adequate real military posture and an adequate perception of sufficient military strength to meet the needs of the Free World; secondly, to be able to handle this energy situation, which is at the crux of so many of our economic problems; and thirdly, a challenge of keeping our own economy and the dollar strong and sound. And all three of these challenges, the military, the energy and the basic economic structure of our country are clearly inter-related to each other, but must each be met if we're going to continue to hold up our share of the Free World's burden in the 1980's.

Gene Bradley: Stan, I'd like to deviate from the prepared script slightly to report very briefly on our trip to Europe and the question that was posed over and over and over again about one element of strength, namely, will--the will to use our strength. When we arrived in England we were warned that someone had just come back from France and the report was that the smell of Munich is in the air; that the French would not stand beside us because there are too many commercial relationships with the Soviet Union and, further, as was reported in the Herald-Tribune, the Zeigzag. How could they count on the President of the United States when the policy is reversed so often? It was a refreshing baptism in France, perhaps we were talking with either the right or the wrong people, but exactly the Congress came out that they would rather have a tough United States making commitments and standing by it than what they read in the papers about the President of the United States only less than two months ago recognizing that he had been fooled by the Soviets and it was, indeed, a threat. They wanted to see a tough and determined United States. At that time, however, overseas Harold Brown was saying that the United States would pick the terrain of its own choosing and not just by 1,800 marines against 80,000 Soviet troops on the soil of Afghanistan. In Germany, I have never heard such, again, its a microcosm of a sample, but in those two countries, in France and Germany, not in recent years have I heard an out-and-out statement of fear of Soviet invasion as they did on this trip.

Two years ago, we heard finalization, etc., but not this. And the question that kept coming again and again was, would the United States honor its commitments in NATO, perhaps elsewhere, but specifically in NATO, have the will to do it even if it meant dragging us right smack-dab into whatever kind of war that would ensue? I asked Congressman Zablocki as he was departing here and he said, you know, I've had three Germans visit me and ask the same question. Would you care to respond, Stan?

Admiral Turner: I've got a couple of aspects that I would like to respond to. One is the United States has got to gear up its own will, make up its own mind what it is going to do, not because it's going to please the Europeans, or the Asians, or the Africans, or anybody else. You'll never please all of the rest of the world. The Europeans in particular were very critical of the fact that we did take an aggressive, offensive role in Vietnam. They weren't very supportive in 1973 when we turned back a possible Soviet move into the Middle East. And now, they say we're not aggressive enough. You can't please them all the time. We've got to decide what is right for this country and stick to it and do it. There is no question, however, that in the wake of Vietnam and the wake of Watergate, we have, in my opinion, gone through a period of questioning, a period of wondering what our will was. As usual, or has so fortuitously happened, it appears to me that the Soviet Union has again awakened this country by its blatant

use of large military force, with no excuse whatsoever in Afghanistan. And, one sees throughout the country the best I can make out, a great resurgence of that will and resolve that we all have and have had all along, but it's not been adequately expressed heretofore.

Gene Bradley: Moving to role of intelligence agencies. What do you see is the best and the most likely role for the CIA and other intelligence agencies in US foreign policy as we go through this review?

Admiral Turner: Well, our whole raison d'etre is to keep the policymakers of this country as well informed as possible, and that means three things to me: they need to know the facts of what's happening, the conditions in various parts of the world; but secondly, and almost more important, they need to understand the trends that are behind them. Instant predictions are not the most important part of our task, but being sure that the undercurrents, the directions which can be shaped by the United States' policy if we work on it in advance. That those are highlighted is very important to the policy function. But finally, and most importantly, the CIA, in particular of our intelligence agencies, must provide objectivity in intelligence analysis to the policymakers. This is not to be critical of any of the other intelligence agencies or any of the policy formulating groups in the government, but the Central Intelligence Agency is the only one that does not have any constituent except the

President of the United States. We don't have any policy role, and, therefore, we can and must be as objective as is humanly possible in putting forth unpleasant, contrary views, views that might scotch some policy that a part of another bureaucracy could not get forward through the bureaucratic maze because it was going to be so contrary to a policy view that we being held there. And so, we look on that very much as our role, to be the objective SOB who says, the emperor has no clothes if that's necessary.

Gene Bradley: I'll ask one more question. I have a list of questions, but let me advise that this will be the last question I'll ask before opening it up to questions from the audience. I think this would be the most productive way of having total involvement. So, at this point, Stan, my next and last interim question would be an appraisal of yours on Soviet military strength; your assessments of their strengths and their weaknesses and how do you evaluate US response to the Soviet move into Afghanistan.

Admiral Turner: That's one question? Well, as I mentioned earlier, the great strength of the Soviet military machine is the steady, plodding determination with which they just grind it out. They don't wait for head in technology, they take the best that they've got and they turn it out and keep it going. They also don't seem to give anything away once they've built and bought it. They have a huge warehouse over there which

lets them project power in a way that we can't; that is, they can take great quantities of military machinery and feed them to an Ethiopia and they don't notice because they've got it sitting on the shelf. The Soviets also have a real strength in that where they're not as sophisticated as we, they are very good at a combination of brute force and redundancy in less complex systems that still will do the job. And in many cases, do it just as well as what American industry can do in half the size and half the weight and twice the complications. So they have some exceptionally good equipment. And particularly from my own background as a naval officer, I must that I have to admire the way they went about building a navy, not building in our image, or the British image, or anybody's image, but they looked and said what do we need? And they went and built that kind of a navy. Step by step. And I think they are good at that in their other services as well in trying to be sure that they really are gearing to the anticipated requirements of the Soviet Union. They have, of course, weaknesses as well. One is their allies are not as reliable as our allies. And we've got to always remember that we not standing alone against the Soviet Union, we are part of the NATO Alliance and it does have great strength and resiliency. Secondly, the Soviets have two fronts: they cannot forget their Chinese front and they are very concerned about it. And thirdly, I believe they have a weakness in their manpower in the rate of turnover in their military is very high, their educational levels are low compared

with ours, and I think that overall, the sense of initiative, the sense of determination of the American fighting man is better. Training, from all I can see I believe our people are better trained and can do a better job of maintaining the equipment they have, operating it and getting the most out of it. We are now in the midst of a very intelligence analysis of the Soviet performance in Afghanistan. Of course, the story isn't fully written yet, but it's clear that the Soviet military machine did not operate as they would have hoped in the first months of Afghanistan. And it has not come up to their expectations and they are scrambling and scratching and doing all kinds of things and I don't predict they will not be able to correct this, but this, their first real combat engagement since World War II, has not covered the Soviet military machine with great glory.

Gene Bradley: I'm going to refrain from (inaudible) I had more, but let's open it up to our associates. Ladies and gentlemen.

Q. (inaudible)

A. Well, in the last two years, and more pointedly in the last year, we have felt a much greater sense of support from both the Congress and the public. Even the media occasionally says something nice about us. And I think there has just come a recognition in this country that

the world is not all sweetness and light and you do need good information, and it isn't always easy to get and there are more closed societies than open societies, more societies that will take advantage of you when simple things like the great Soviet wheat steal of 1972, when simple statistical data was not available to us that should have been that we've got to go out and get it. And I think there is also more in the last year than at any time, an increasing recognition that if you want a secret intelligence service, you've got to have some secrets and you've to be able to keep those secrets. And I still have some problems, you may be reading in the press today, on Capitol Hill and elsewhere, with trying to define that. I believe that in the last three years we have set up a system of oversight of the intelligence apparatus in this country unprecedented in the history of secret intelligence services. One, that through its oversight in the Executive Branch and in the Congress, gives the public a high assurance against any kind of offenses or abuses of the privilege of intelligence and its secrecy. But, that does not mean we can than just open up the floodgates and let everybody know everything we're doing or we'll be totally out of business. But I believe there is a good balance today already in existence, and it has been proven over these last few years, between the ability of the oversight mechanisms to check on what we're

doing and our ability to keep the necessary privacy that we have to over certain very sensitive kinds of things.

- Q. The President's recent Perkins Commission report reported on the sad state of language and area studies in the United States. To the extent that you can share a response with us, have you found in recruiting and managing the CIA that this is causing a severe difficulty for you in finding people with the necessary skills to do these analyses?
- A. Maybe I wouldn't go along with severe, but it is certainly causing us some problems. We work closely with the Perkins Commission to give them our input and our views. And certainly it is true that in the educational system of the country, the area studies programs have not been thriving and we do have problems in getting people with language background and an academic skill; getting someone who can read and understand Farsi and is an economist also who could have told us what was really happening in the Iranian economy the last five years is not easy. And it's not easy to get the man or woman who gets that economic skill then go take the time, and you cannot understand an economy such as that, that's just an example; that is, we can't afford to translate all the relevant material into English, so that we have to have people with both the technical and academic skills and the languages. We have done a lot in the last few years to beef up language training, but it a slow, costly program and we are behind

and we need much more language skill to complement the others. So I will say that I'm very pleased and very proud that even through the period of the most intense criticism of the Central Intelligence Agency, our recruitment on the college campuses has stayed up and the quality has stayed up. And today I'm very impressed with the young people who come into our organization. It is very, very heartening.

Q. I don't mean by my question (inaudible) something you said that you may not have wanted to elaborate on, but you did mention that the United States must develop a will in order to achieve its objectives regardless of our kind of (inaudible) and so on. I don't know if you meant by the United States the public, or the governments that the United States' public (inaudible). If you meant the government, how would the public manifest this since political leadership is so weak in both parties? In other words, how do you get this will to manifest itself when our political leadership, in Congress and in the Administration, is weak? Now, as I say, this question perhaps goes beyond what you intended.

A. It's way out of an intelligence officer's sphere, that's for sure. We do very consciously try to stay out of the political process, because only thus can we achieve the objectivity I mentioned earlier and be impartial in the kind of information we present. But I would only say in response to your question, that the kind of will that we

need and which I think we do have has got to be an expression of both the political leadership and the people. I don't think there's a lack on either side. I think we've just got to keep jelling and thinking about these problems and I think we're doing so much more of that since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan that I feel optimistic.

- Q. I think a large amount of the improvements the public (inaudible) Did President Nixon several years ago give an order to either destroy or to stop making chemical or bacteriological weapons (inaudible) the Soviet Union is under no similar constraints. It is my perception (inaudible)
- A. The question is are we behind in chemical and biological weaponry in Europe in particular. And the answer is yes. And are we doing anything about it is out of my sphere, so what the United States is actually doing but, I'm not sure the Nixon ban was on chemical; again, I'm out of my territory. No, there was one on biological weaponry but chemical would get into such things as tear gas, and surely we're still in that sphere. It's a troubling problem because there's no question that the Soviets have built a large chemical capability and that their military equipment is configured so as to give them what defense you can against this kind of warfare. There has been, I believe,

more emphasis on at least the defensive sides of that in the United States military in recent years but I can't elaborate much more in an open forum.

Gene Bradley: I should add that this is a phenomenal opportunity to have Admiral Turner with us. I have known him for many years and he is one of the most conceptual thinkers as well as a mind like a steel trap that knows all the details. We are, Stan, I recognize, putting you on the spot because you are our only an Administration spokesman here today so you're getting questions which ordinarily might be directed towards Brown or State Department or someone else, but you'll have to forgive us on that. I do have questions myself. I'd rather refer to the audience.

Q. (inaudible)

A. What kind of collaboration should there be between business and the CIA, particularly in foreign countries? One of the reasons, besides my respect and friendship for Gene that I am here with you today; one of the reasons, about once a month I go to some city in this country and sit down for an evening with twenty or thirty business executives and just have a bull sessions like we're having here, is because the proper kind of cooperation between the business community and the CIA is very important to our country. On the one

hand, it is quite proper for business, in my opinion to share with us information that is acquired in the course of your normal, routine activities. And, in fact, if I did not attempt to find out what the business community knew that we needed to know without first going out and using a spy or even an expensive satellite or something else that's risky and costly, I'd think I would not be doing my job well. In the corpus of the United States, we ought to try to make it available to the government. We believe that can and is done in a perfectly open, but discreet way. We have offices in

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☐ cities in the United States listed in the telephone book and it's not a question of asking the business community to spy for us, it's a question of asking for what your views and your information is. We obviously would, in many cases, tell you what kind of things we're interested in if those pieces of information become available, we're very grateful for that. And it is very helpful to us because, sometimes those are the clues--clues that are not necessarily apparent to the individual business itself. Because it when you aggregate a group of data from ten or twelve different business and then you add to it, or that leads you to go look at your sensitive secret information, then you maybe have got something that jells for the first time. On the other side, I have tried very hard over the last three years to try to make it more of a two-way street; that is, we have been publishing more in unclassified form and we have tried to ferret out what

is of most interest to the business community that we produce. It's a shame on the other directions, for the government to have information that would be of value to the business community and not share it when it can be shared. Now, obviously, you can't go back to the beginning, share the very secret material, but usually what we can't share is how we got it. And when we take that out of a secret report, we then look at it and say is there enough left here to be of real value to the public or to the business community, and, if so, we publish it and Gene has on his right here for any of you who are interested, a little flysheet that we put out that tells you how to get the things that we publish that are unclassified and a sample listing of what we've done in the last 6 or 8 months. Some of these are of considerable interest to the business world, some are of more interest to academics or others, but you can judge for yourself. We are trying to do that more and by meeting with groups like this and, as I say, around the country we are trying to get a better feel for what sorts of things we do are of interest to you. We cannot be your intelligence officers or agencies, we cannot do work for you in specifics, but we can look at what we are doing for the government and see whether spillovers are of mutual benefit.

- Q. You mentioned the CIA offices here are in the phone book. Overseas, do you just contact the Embassy's political officer or ambassador?

- A. Yes, we do not list our telephone numbers overseas. If we can't rid of Mr. Agee and his types we might as well be in the phone book.
- Q. I have one more question, Stan, mainly the energy outlook in the 1980's. Obviously this effects foreign policy, it effects domestic (end of tape)
- A. (pick up on Side B) We are living on the knife-edge in the energy world. Right now we talk of a glut of oil which may well come about as a temporary short-term phenomenon but the basic statistic that has always impressed me is that in the 1970's the world (and these are pretty round numbers) discovered about a hundred billion barrels of oil and consumed about 180-200 billion. Something like that. We cannot go on like that forever. In the last few years, we have now seen an increasing tendency to conservation on the part of the major oil-producing countries. We are all very aware of that and I think it is understandable; from their point of view the oil is more valuable in the ground than it is in bank deposits; from their point of view, they do not want to overheat their economy--many of them cannot spend it even if they try; they have learned or observed what happened in Iran and it has caused a lot of concern about how fast they should heat up. In 1980 it is our prediction that the Free World, the non-communist world will have available about 2 million barrels a day less of oil than it did in 1979. Now that is a fairly startling statistic because we are used to the opposite;

we are used to a constant increase in supply and, of course, the demand factors, while there are some efforts to level them off, are still pushing. So we see ourselves poised on the knife-edge where a terrorist attack, a revolution, an embargo could really push us over the edge; and similarly, a real strong growth in the Free World economy is probably, in my opinion, out of the question because there will not be the energy available. Conservation is essential but it has not taken hold to the point yet where we are going to have any flexibility. And if it were not for the economic downturn the OECD nations are experiencing today, we would be under much greater pressure. So, in a word, we see the world energy situation in the next 5 or 8 years as limiting economic growth and, as a result, exerting constant pressure on the price of energy, with its effect, of course, again, on the economic growth picture. You asked about other materials, Gene. We have lost our near self-sufficiency in many other raw materials--bauxite, chromium, cobalt, maganese, nickel, platinum, tungsten, to mention some of the most important ones. In most of these cases, between Canada and Australia, we are reasonably secure. There are still things like platinum and chrome and cobalt that have to come from Africa and we have to be concerned. Remember the invasion of southern Zaire both in 1977 and 1978, about two-thirds of the world's cobalt supply comes from there and it was very much in jeopardy. There is enough in the world to go around if we can get at it as opposed to the energy, which we just cannot get out of the ground rapidly enough, and I am not talking now about the long-term reserve energy. They are, obviously, finite as I

mentioned at the very beginning, but the immediate problem is can you get as much out of the ground as you want to consume in the next few years.

Q. Would you comment on the sale of American-made products to the USSR in the current political climate. As you know, for about a dozen years the government has encouraged the sale of American-made products to the USSR (inaudible). Secretary Vance said yesterday in Chicago that at the point that the current crisis evaporates, that our government would be anxious to remove the sanctions (inaudible).

A. You are getting me off in the policy sphere where I do not belong, but let me say a couple of things about it. On the grain side, which is maybe not what you are asking about particularly, the United States can really exercise leverage on its own. On the other areas, as far as the impact on the Soviet Union of cutting off sales of oil drilling equipment or other kinds of technology, to be an effective lever of foreign policy you have to have cooperation of the principal allies. That's a major foreign policy issue. Do we feel that strongly? Are we going to get that kind of cooperation, encourage that kind of cooperation from the allies? And you have to have it in effect for some period of time because most things like large diameter steel pipe, they have got a six-months supply on hand to be laid and it takes a while to have an impact. Whether we should or should not push in this direction is a very broad foreign policy issue. We have had the

(Kolcon?) restriction you are aware of, all along, and there may be some tightening of that, but that is a matter of long-term strategic issue of how much of a technological advantage do we have do we want to let escape in any way. So, I think that is about all I can really give you on that.

- Q. Would you entertain questions from our corporate government associates, diplomatic, domestic, international, either with us serving as a conduit or better sent to you with a mechanism so that this kind of dialogue can continue, because I think it is hugely valuable?
- A. I would be happy to do what we can, but there is a limit to how much intelligence service I can give directly. What we have on the shelf here that we have done for the government we are very pleased to share and to let you know what we have got that may approximate an answer to your question. I am sorry to end on a note where I do not sound as forthcoming as I would like to be because I am really anxious to share more with you. On particular issues we are always glad to try.

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